

What Happened To Pentecost?

Some attempt to make a case for the cessation of the Pentecostal experience by declaring the Holy Spirit was taken from Earth.

Others, attempt, through the spirit of religion, to explain the ceasing of Pentecost as an event of another bygone dispensation, or the spiritual gifts were no longer necessary because we now have the written scriptures after the last Apostles died.

Could it be that God has always had a remnant of people who have experienced the same Holy Spirit baptism the first century church did?

Is that Pentecostal fire still available today and readily available for “whoever will?” The truth is many believers have been either lied to or uninformed that there is nothing more than what we currently have as followers of Jesus Christ.

For the first 325 years of church history, the standard operating procedure for the Church was Pentecost:

- St. Augustine noted that miracles were primarily responsible for reproducing the Christian faith.
- So, what happened that quenched the Pentecostal fire and caused the majority of believers to cease expecting His empowerment in their lives?
- Some mark the conversion of Constantine [Roman Emperor] as the beginning of the end for the prevalence of the miraculous ministry.
- He institutionalized Christianity by making it the state religion of Rome, thereby making it mandatory to believe in Christianity.
- While this protected true Christians from persecution, it polluted the church while un-converted persons sought the blessing of the Emperor.
- This caused many fake conversions for the sake of recognition of favor with man and from fear of being in violation of Rome.

Yet, through all of church history many held faithful to the Pentecostal experience:

Church Fathers: Origen, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and others recognized the presence of Pentecostal power in healings and resurrections of the dead.

Through their faithfulness to the message and under the threat of their very lives, they continued to proclaim the Kingdom of God and demonstrate Holy Spirit power.

Around the 4th century, the power of Holy Spirit began to be ignored and:

- Miracles became the exception rather than the norm for Christianity.
- Pentecostal demonstrations were reserved for a “holy elite” crowd.
- Charismatic gifts were considered either demon possession or sainthood.

- Baptism was treated as a rite/ritual, not an occasion for spiritual impartation.

From Pentecost to Popularity

As Christianity increased in popularity under Emperor Constantine's conversion, the church became institutionalized.

- Baptism was no longer for adult believers who made a commitment to follow Jesus but became a symbolic ritual with no expectation of a supernatural impartation of a changed nature.
- The church became state-run and political in nature rather than guided by spiritual-minded apostolic leaders.
- The church became a safe place for non-believers who faked faith in order to escape persecution from a now governmentally controlled church organization.
- Many who were in the church didn't have a true conversion encounter with Jesus Christ – bringing in their paganism and illicit lifestyles, mixing them together.
- They were living with one foot in their idolatrous world and the other in the Kingdom of God.
- The church sought to make the world comfortable and accommodate them by embracing their worldly, pagan, and occultic lifestyles.
- We are still seeing this accommodation among many churches today who are trying to “**win them over.**”

Looking at history then and the church now, there are four common denominators responsible for disconnecting the Body of Christ from the power of Holy Spirit:

1. Institutionalism –

When or if the church decides to place the main emphasis on its identity as a business or organization, its supernatural purpose is compromised, and it promotes a more formal and palatable version of the Christian faith.

- **Pentecostal lite** version
- Yes, the church must have business acumen and pay its bills and be run with accountability and excellence.

The main calling must be its function in the world to be a Spirit-filled community that boldly releases the Kingdom of God.

The words of Jesus must remain the main focus:

I will give you the keys of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:19

- Jesus did not birth the church with business strategy; He gave a company of people Kingdom keys that would bind the powers of hell and unlock the culture of Heaven, setting captives to sin free.
- The business aspects of the church should exist for the advancement of God's Kingdom through the community of a local church.

2. Formalism –

Observing the church in history, we see institutionalism gave birth to a rigid formalism.

Gone were the times of spontaneous Holy Spirit outpourings, now replaced by liturgy and erecting cathedrals for meetings which were exalted above the move of Holy Spirit.

- Spontaneity was replaced with inflexible religious protocol.
- The selling of indulgences for fictitious purgatory replaced the gift of salvation by faith through grace.
- The decline of the Christian faith was the result of many years where the voice of church leadership said **“NO”** to the free-flowing move of the Spirit and **“YES”** to the political aberrations of the faith.

3. World Compromise –

This is the effort of the church trying to become like the world that it hopes to “bring in.”

- It's when the church lays down time-honored Biblical values to accommodate immoral trends in society in an effort to “win them over.”
- **“Christianity lite”** if you will!

Scripture warns of this trend in the last days:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ...⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

- The trends today are to integrate secular culture into liturgy and services to gain popular appeal.
- This compromise is **impotent** – Holy Spirit will not rest upon what is incompatible with His nature.
- He is holy and if the church thinks it can use the unholy to introduce people to the holy – we are deceived.
- It really is saying to the Lord, “Holy Spirit is just not enough; strategies and tactics from the fallen world are needed to attract people to the Kingdom of God.”

Question: When the world is used to draw people into the Kingdom, how do we keep them?
What do we disciple them to become?

Many are embracing this approach – it’s a “**soft Pentecost or Christianity**” that accommodates their worldly lifestyles.

It’s a refusal to embrace Jesus as not only a Savior but Lord of one’s life.

When the church attempts to appeal by sounding and looking like Broadway – Hollywood – or Disney World; we are doing the world a disservice.

We are called to offer people an encounter with a living God who alone has the answers to life.

People experience an encounter with God by the power of Holy Spirit:

John 6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

John 16:18 *And when He comes, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*

**If the church is not offering Pentecost,
we are offering an insubstantial substitute**

We are not called to “tone or dumb down” Holy Spirit:

It’s been said, the Holy Spirit is a gentleman, which is not His total character.

Yes, He lighted gently on Jesus at His baptism.

He also comes as: A fire, a rushing wind, suddenly coming upon His people:

Matthew 3:16 and Acts 2:1-4.

When He moves, we don't need to quench Him, but announce: This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel that in the last days I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...

1 Thessalonians 5:19 *Do not quench the Spirit.*

- **“Stifle the flame”**
- Cautioning Christians not to suppress the fire of God's Spirit that burns within us.
- The command is similar to the Thessalonian church reminding Timothy “*to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you*” 2 Timothy 1:6
- Every time you say **YES** to Holy Spirit, you will become more sensitive to His voice; but every time you say **NO** to Him, you harden your spirit.

**The world does not want the world repackaged in the church,
people who desire to know God come to the church expecting to find Him there -
they are looking for something beyond what they currently have!**

**We are doing the people who are legitimately searching for God a grievous
disservice when we exchange Holy Spirit for something modern, cool, or trendy
in our attempts to be relevant**

We need to be asking and seeking: “What is Heaven's Protocol?”

- More than waiting on the Lord one day, some day; the Lord is waiting for His people who will take Him at His word and operate in the power of Pentecost **NOW!**

Here's the remedy:

1. Pursue God's Presence Above Protocol

#1 Core value of WOWChurch: We value the Presence of Almighty God. Accommodating Holy Spirits' presence among us is our chief end in life and ministry.

- We have a plan, we have an order of service, we have our protocol for operating; but we are sensitive to His leading and changing plans as He calls for change.
- We are in a flexible, yielded mode – allowing our ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to His Church.

2. Value both the Word of the Lord, preached and taught, and the moving of Holy Spirit

- Its not one or the other; it's both working together to build believers up to do the work of the ministry assigned to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.
- "We are people of the Word *and* people of the Spirit."
- The Word is never meant to function separate from Holy Spirit.

3. Risk embracing Holy Spirit, adapting to His blueprints

- Following the cloud of Holy Spirit demands risk taking. That's what faith is: RISK & TRUST.
- As Holy Spirit prompts us to give a word, pray a prayer, call/visit a person, etc. as in unity with the Word, we will learn to obey.
- This takes courage.

We need to ask ourselves:

**Who does our allegiance belong to, who deserves trust?
ISN'T IT GOD AND HIM ALONE?**

4. Create a culture of humility and hunger, where everyone gets to operate in the gifts of the Spirit

- This is not a one man or woman show!
- Those who walk in the supernatural gifts are allowed to function in those gifts for the edification of the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:12 *Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, **let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.***

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *For you see your calling, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble [*elite*], are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base [*insignificant*] things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ **that no flesh should glory in His presence.***

In this time of anticipation of Holy Spirit bringing another great reformation to those who are hungry – I want to invite you to come on this adventure with us.

- When we respond to something we agree with, we typically say AMEN which means "I agree."

I WANT TO CHANGE THAT TODAY AND RATHER THAN RESPOND AMEN –

I ASK YOU TO RESPOND, "*I'M IN!*"